



DO YOU HAVE A PELVIC FLOOR DISORDER?

What You Can & Should Do About It

The pelvic floor is a group of muscles in your pelvic area. These muscles support the organs in your pelvis like a sling. The organs in this area include the bladder, uterus (women) and rectum (the area at the end of the large intestine where your body stores solid waste). By contracting and relaxing these muscles, you control your bowel and bladder movements.

If you have weak pelvic floor muscles, it can cause your bladder to leak and other embarrassing conditions called pelvic floor disorders. Pelvic floor disorders affect women of all ages. Experts estimate that 1 of every 3 women in the United States has a pelvic floor condition. But because so many women don't tell their doctor, they're probably much more common.

You may feel too embarrassed to discuss these issues with your doctor, but telling your doctor about these conditions can help you get the right treatment.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF PELVIC FLOOR DISORDER?

Several symptoms may suggest pelvic floor disorder. If you have any of these, you should discuss them with your physician. Some symptoms may also indicate other conditions, but a complete physical exam should be able to determine what is causing your symptoms.

Symptoms of pelvic floor disorder include:

- » The feeling that you need to have several bowel movements during a short period of time.
- » The feeling that you cannot complete a bowel movement.
- » Constipation or straining pain with bowel movements.
- » A frequent need to urinate. When you do go, you may stop and start many times.



- » Painful urination.
- » Pain in your lower back that cannot be explained by other causes.
- » Ongoing pain in your pelvic region, genitals, or rectum.
- » Pain for women during intercourse.

Many factors—including family history, pregnancy, menopause, weight, and smoking history—can affect your risk for developing a pelvic floor disorder. Depending on the condition, treatment options may include dietary changes, physical therapy, medications, medical devices, or surgery.

For women, pelvic floor physical therapy often begins with simple pelvic floor exercises. Some of these are known as Kegel exercises. They make the pelvic muscles stronger. Any woman can benefit from these exercises. However, Kegels performed at home may not work for

some women with a pelvic floor condition. This may be because women don't hold the exercises long enough, and they don't do enough of them during the day. Ask your health care provider how to do them correctly.

Women who have a pelvic floor condition don't have to suffer. Treatments are available. If you have any problem with your bladder function it's absolutely important to speak with your doctor about it.

LOWER YOUR RISK OF PELVIC FLOOR ISSUES

- » Maintain a healthy weight.
- » Avoid constipation and straining by getting enough fiber and fluids in your diet.
- » Avoid tobacco smoke and triggers of a long-term cough, which weaken the pelvic floor.
- » Do Kegel exercises regularly to keep pelvic floor muscles toned. Ask your health care provider how to do them correctly.

